

# Reading Toolkit: Grade 4 Objective 2.A.6.b

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective b. Identify and explain additions or changes to format or features that would make the text easier to understand

Assessment Limits:

Connections between effectiveness of format and text features in clarifying the main idea of the text

Connections between effectiveness of format and text features in clarifying the main idea of the text

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## Lesson Seeds

### Reading Grade 4 Objective 2.A.6.b

#### Activities

The teacher will provide students with an informational text, which has a variety of text features. Students will read the text and with teacher assistance determine the author's purpose. Next students should be placed in small groups where they will analyze each text feature's effectiveness in supporting the author's purpose. Students should be able to justify their proposed degree of effectiveness with text support. In general class discussion, each student group will share its findings. Finally the class will list the text features from the highest degree of effectiveness to the lowest degree of effectiveness in supporting the author's purpose.

The teacher will provide students with an informational passage from which all text features have been removed. Students will read the text and with teacher guidance and using only the organizational pattern of the text determine the type of text, its main idea, and purpose. Next, students should be placed in small groups. Each group should determine a single text feature that could be added to the text, which would assist a reader in understanding its content. If possible, students could actually create the text feature. Each group should report the text feature they would add and explain how it would assist a reader. Finally, the teacher should share the passage with its original text features intact so students can judge if the original or their amended passage is most helpful to a reader.

Teacher and students should read an informational passage with a variety of text features and determine together the main idea of the passage. Next teacher and students should focus on the text features of the passage and cooperatively complete a chart like the given sample. Each text feature should be reviewed and determination made about its effectiveness as it exists, complete removal, or adjustment to increase its effectiveness.

| Text Feature | Keep/Delete/Change | How does this make the text easier to understand? |
|--------------|--------------------|---|
|              |                    |   |
|              |                    |   |
|              |                    |   |

As an extension, students may want to create a text feature that is not present and share it with the class to explain its effectiveness. Teacher Note: Once this activity has been modeled, student should be able to work successfully in an independent mode.

The teacher will divide the class into four groups where each group will have the task to focus on print features, graphic aids, informational aids, or organizational aids of an assigned informational passage. As each passage rotates among the groups, each group will focus only on its assigned text feature. They will determine the degree of its effectiveness and whether changing the feature could increase its effectiveness. Once the rotation is complete, as each passage is shared with the whole class, each group will share its judgment of the passage's text features.

## Clarification

### Reading Grade 4 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of **critical evaluation of informational text**, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to **determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style**. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that **information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading**.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to **identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning**. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The **analysis of informational text for reliability** is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the **author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic**. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to **elements of bias** in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what **additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text**. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect **words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings**. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc...all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to **analyze an author's style** which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.

## Public Release Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

### Question

Read "Chinese Almond Cookies" and answer the following question. Think about another illustration the author could add to help the reader better understand this recipe. Explain how the illustration would help the reader better understand the recipe. Use information from the recipe in your explanation. Write your answer in your answer book.

### Annotated Student Responses

An illustration would help the reader by showing them what an almond extract is, because not many people know what that is. It would also show the reader how to use a paring knife correctly, because you might mess up and cut your finger. Finally, the illustrations would capture the readers attention, make them think, "Wow! This looks good!" instead of, "Oh, here's some food."

Score for Sample Student Response #1: Rubric Score 3

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The student identifies several illustrations that would help a reader better understand the recipe. The student effectively clarifies the choice of each illustration by adding a reason for having it: "...how to use a paring knife correctly, because you might mess-up and cut your fingers." The student further explains that illustrations "would capture the readers attention."

I think some illustrations would help the reader compare what he/she makes with the picture. For example, if after each step there was a picture, then the reader could more easily understand the directions better and catch their mistakes with more ease. (Or at least a picture half way through the recipe.)

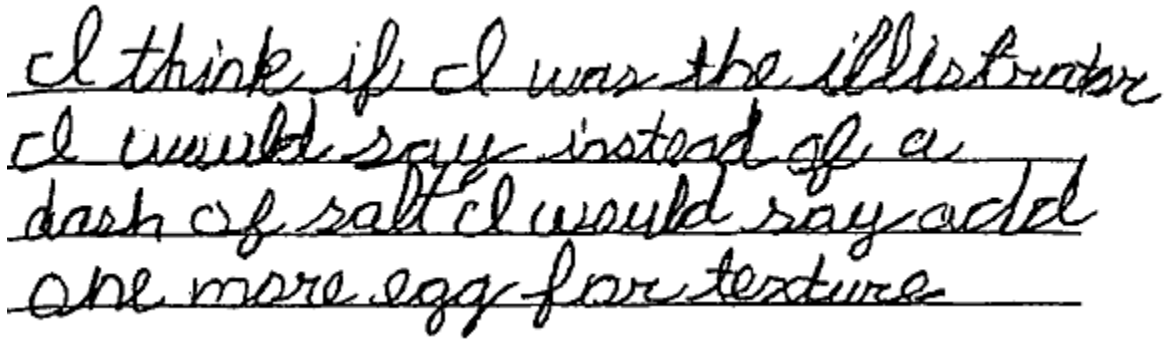
Score for Sample Student Response #2: Rubric Score 2

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a general understanding of the text. The student suggests that adding illustrations would help readers "compare what he/she makes with the picture." The student explains how illustrations would be helpful to the reader, "the reader could more easily understand the directions better and catch their mistakes with more ease," but needs to explain the content of illustrations needed or the types of mistakes the illustrations might prevent for a higher score.

I think the author could of drawed step next to each picture so if a 4 grader could not read they would just have to look at the pictures and they might get it or they might not.

Score for Sample Student Response #3: Rubric Score 1

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. The student explains why illustrations would be useful to a reader, "...they would just have to look at the pictures and they might get it or they might not." The information provided is minimal and can be related to any recipe.



A handwritten student response on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and spans four lines. The first line reads "i think if i was the illistrator", the second line reads "i would say insted of a", the third line reads "dash of salt i would say add", and the fourth line reads "one more egg for texture".

i think if i was the illistrator  
i would say insted of a  
dash of salt i would say add  
one more egg for texture

Score for Sample Student Response #4: Rubric Score 0

Annotation, Using the Rubric: This response is completely incorrect.

## Handouts

## Chinese Almond Cookies

By David C. King

Each region of China has its own special style of cooking. When Chinese immigrants began arriving in the United States in the mid-1800s, they brought with them many of the delicious recipes from their homeland. Some of the immigrants established restaurants and bakeries. Chinese food soon became popular throughout the country. In traditional Chinese cooking, the main meal of the day would usually include fruit for dessert. Sweets, like the tasty cookies you'll make in this recipe, were usually served with afternoon tea.

## INGREDIENTS

1/4 pound butter or vegetable shortening,  
softened  
3/4 cup sugar  
1 egg  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
1 tablespoon whole milk or light cream  
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
dash of salt (about 1/8 teaspoon)  
1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
3/4 teaspoon almond extract (available in the  
spice section of supermarkets)  
36 blanched almond halves or 18 whole almonds  
cut in half

## EQUIPMENT

measuring cup  
measuring spoons  
2 medium-size mixing bowls  
wooden mixing spoon  
eggbeater  
2 cookie sheets  
paring knife (to be used by an adult for  
cutting whole almonds)  
teaspoon  
adult helper

## YIELDS

about 3 dozen cookies

## STEPS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Place the softened butter in a mixing bowl and stir it well with a mixing spoon to make it creamy. If you use vegetable shortening, you won't need to stir it much.
3. Add the sugar to the butter or shortening, a little at a time. As you add the sugar, stir constantly. Keep stirring until the mixture lightens in color.
4. Add the egg, vanilla, and milk or cream. Beat the mixture well with an eggbeater until all the ingredients are blended.
5. Place the flour, salt, and baking powder in the other mixing bowl. Stir the mixture with a clean, dry spoon.
6. Add the flour mixture to the first mixture, a little at a time, stirring constantly.
7. Add the almond extract and mix the ingredients well with the eggbeater.
8. Using one slightly rounded teaspoon for each cookie, place the dough on ungreased cookie sheets. Flatten each cookie a little with the spoon and allow about an inch of space between them.
9. Press a half almond onto the center of each cookie. If you use whole almonds, ask your adult helper to cut them in half the long way with a paring knife.
10. With the adult's help, bake the cookies for 8 to 10 minutes. Check the cookies frequently. They're done when they turn golden brown.



## Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

### Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to clarify or extend understanding

### Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to show understanding

### Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

### Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.<sup>2</sup>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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